

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-421](#), a report to the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD relies on technology innovation to maintain superior weapon systems. However, a long-standing challenge has been ensuring that high value technologies are mature and available for military users. The Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 required DOD to establish RIP to facilitate the transition of innovative technologies into acquisition programs, and over \$1.3 billion has been appropriated to the program since its inception.

Senate Report No. 113-44 included a provision that GAO review the execution of RIP. This report examines the extent to which (1) DOD has established a competitive, merit-based process to award RIP contracts; (2) DOD has established practices to manage the execution of RIP projects; and (3) RIP is meeting its objective of rapidly inserting innovative technologies in defense acquisition programs. GAO reviewed RIP documentation, interviewed DOD and military department officials, and reviewed a nongeneralizable sample of 40 projects awarded with fiscal year 2011 and 2012 funding to assess DOD management practices as well as 52 fiscal year 2011 funded projects scheduled for completion through July 2014 to assess transition outcomes.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD establish a program transition goal, and identify and apply factors that lead to transition success. DOD disagreed on the need for a goal, stating it would impede RIP flexibility, but agreed to identify transition success factors. GAO believes having a goal would improve DOD's ability to transition technologies.

View [GAO-15-421](#). For more information, contact Michele Mackin at (202) 512-4841 or mackinm@gao.gov.

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DOD RAPID INNOVATION PROGRAM

Some Technologies Have Transitioned to Military Users, but Steps Can Be Taken to Improve Program Metrics and Outcomes

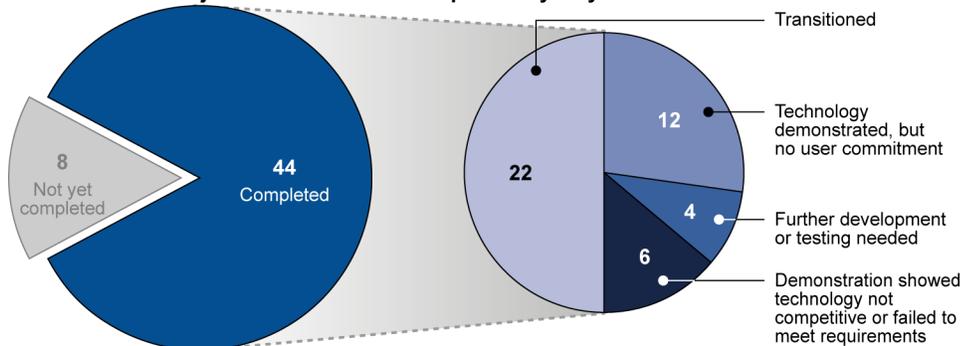
What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has established a competitive, merit-based process to solicit proposals from interested contractors, review and select projects based on military needs and standardized evaluation criteria, and award contracts to execute Rapid Innovation Program (RIP) projects. To date, the process has been lengthy, taking about 18 months to implement, but interest from contractors has been high. Between fiscal years 2011 and 2015, the military services and defense agency components received more than 11,000 white papers on proposed technologies from contractors and will have awarded contracts for about 435 projects—primarily to small businesses—when the fiscal year 2014 solicitation is completed.

The military services and defense components have practices and tools in place to manage and monitor the execution of projects, which are similar to those they use for other science and technology projects. For example, project officials review contractor reports, conduct system reviews, and engage in regular communications with contractors to determine the progress of projects. Also, DOD's 2014 annual review found that 85 percent of the fiscal year 2011 funded projects and 78 percent of the fiscal year 2012 funded projects were likely to meet 80 percent or more of their technical performance goals.

Some completed projects have successfully transitioned technology to acquisition programs and other military users. DOD officials estimate that 50 percent of all fiscal year 2011 funded projects (88 of 175) have out-year funding commitments from military users, indicating the likelihood they will transition technologies. GAO assessed 44 projects completed in July 2014, and found that 50 percent successfully transitioned to acquisition programs or other users. However, it is too soon to accurately assess the overall success of RIP due to the limited number of completed projects as well as the lack of an overall program transition goal and effective metrics to track the degree to which projects have actually transitioned. GAO found that several factors can contribute to transition success of RIP projects, such as having military user commitment and mature technology when projects are started. However, DOD has not made an effort to understand how these factors may be contributing to differences in transition success from defense components with a higher rate of transition.

Transition of 52 Projects Scheduled for Completion by July 2014



Source: GAO analysis of DOD data. | GAO-15-421